

***Blackbirding*: the intensive recruitment of New Hebridean Labour during the
19th century**

Chronological framework and statistical data

1863-1906

2nd version



Francis Christian Bryard

November 2022

Cover image: the *Young Dick* recruiting in Pangkumu, Malekula, 1890, National Library of Australia

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1. Introduction

Due to its scale, duration and profound consequences on the Melanesian societies of the New Hebrides, the intensive recruitment of New Hebridean workers between 1863 and 1904 constitutes a major historical phenomenon whose complexity remains to be determined. For, despite the abundance of research published since the 1970s, many questions still remain unclear concerning in particular the proportion of women and children, the frequency and motivations of re-engagements and the impact of the returns on the “modernization” of the archipelago and the reconstruction of a new identity. Although the traffic to Queensland has been deeply studied, the same cannot be said for New Caledonia, Fiji or Samoa, which still represented important parts of this traffic.

What is often the most remembered of this period is indeed the prevalence of its excesses: kidnapping, murder of islanders, murder of recruiters and sailors, deceptions, retaliations of the English or French Navy against natives’ villages, ill treatment on plantations... The list of abuses is unfortunately very long and reflects above all a history of colonial violence, amply illustrated in this chronology.

And yet this history cannot be limited to only this aspect. In 40 years, islanders have also become actors in this recruitment; they have sometimes refused recruitment when conditions and wages were considered insufficient, sometimes negotiated their rates and also re-engaged when the opportunity presented itself. Measuring all the facets of this traffic is therefore an opportunity to understand the complexity of a key period in our history, and also to review certain ideas concerning both the opposing role of missionaries and the so-called passive role of islanders.

This chronology is a second version that has been greatly expanded. It gives more space to New Caledonia, Samoa and Fiji and presents a complete list of missionary writings against the traffic. From a wide range of sources, we present for the first time a whole set of statistical data that allow to more precisely visualise the importance of the New Hebrides in the traffic and especially how our islands have been affected. For the first time also, we have added the protest movements of Melanesian workers in Australia which from the 1880s began to emerge and which constitutes a whole field of studies still little developed.

This work remains in constant evolution and, given the wealth of sources, will continue to evolve over the coming years.

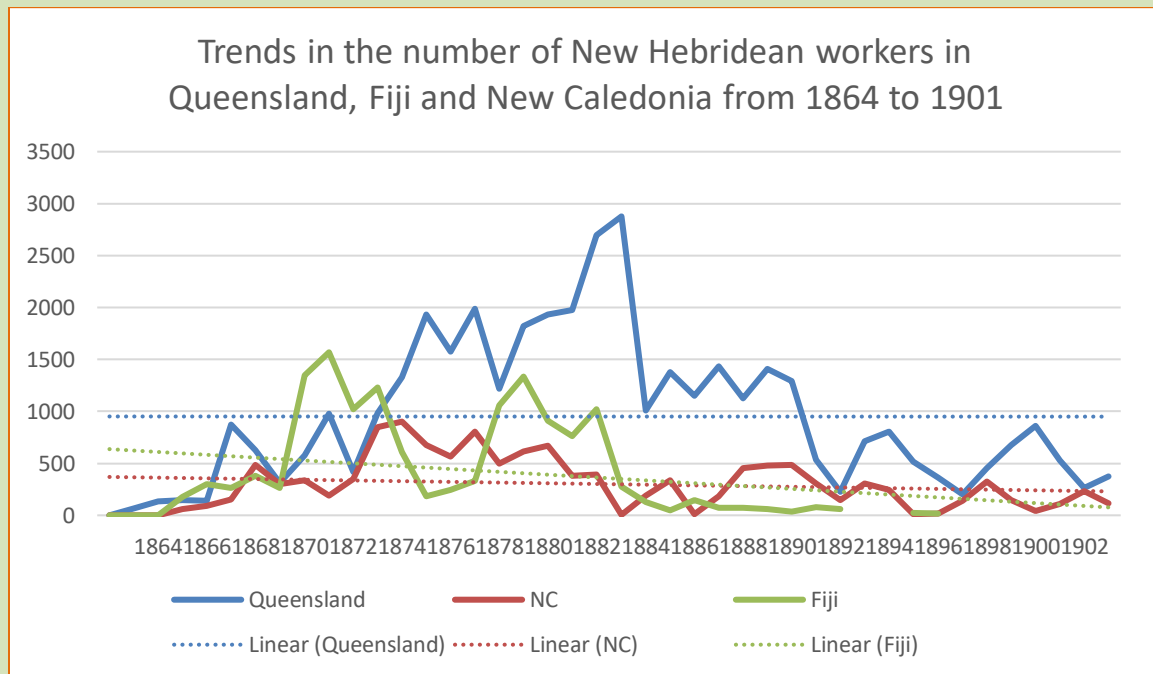
2. Periodisation

Three periods can broadly be identified from 1863:

Period 1: 1863-1872: this period corresponds to the structuring and regionalization of the traffic. While the traffic really starts with «recruitment» by Benjamin Boyd and Ross-Lewin for Australia, Fiji follows in 1864 as does New Caledonia the following year. Very quickly, regular flows are being formed in spite of

strong opposition especially in Fiji and Australia. The kidnapping charges are contemporary with these beginnings and will increase in number, highlighting the lack of effective legislation. While the *Polynesian Labour Act* is passed in 1868, the *Daphne* affair in 1869 will show the limits of this legislation and will drive the English Navy to only make arrests within very strict settings.

Period 2: 1872-1880: this is the most intensive period with a doubling of recruitment for the plantations in Queensland.



This is also the most violent period. With the number of recruiting vessels increasing, the movements of resistance are amplified as the firearms gained in the first period allow the islanders to better protect themselves. The English navy's retaliatory interventions onto the islanders are multiplied.

Period 3: 1880-1906: recruitment gradually decreases but the situation in the New Hebrides is complicated by the growing interest of New Caledonian settlers for a French annexation of the New Hebrides. Colonial rivalries between France and England then become apparent, altering the resistance towards labour trafficking. It is during this period that the number of returns to the New Hebrides increases significantly and with the evangelization efforts of the Melanesians in Queensland, more and more converts emerge.

3. Geography of the Traffic

Map 1. Labour trafficking in the Pacific in the 19th century

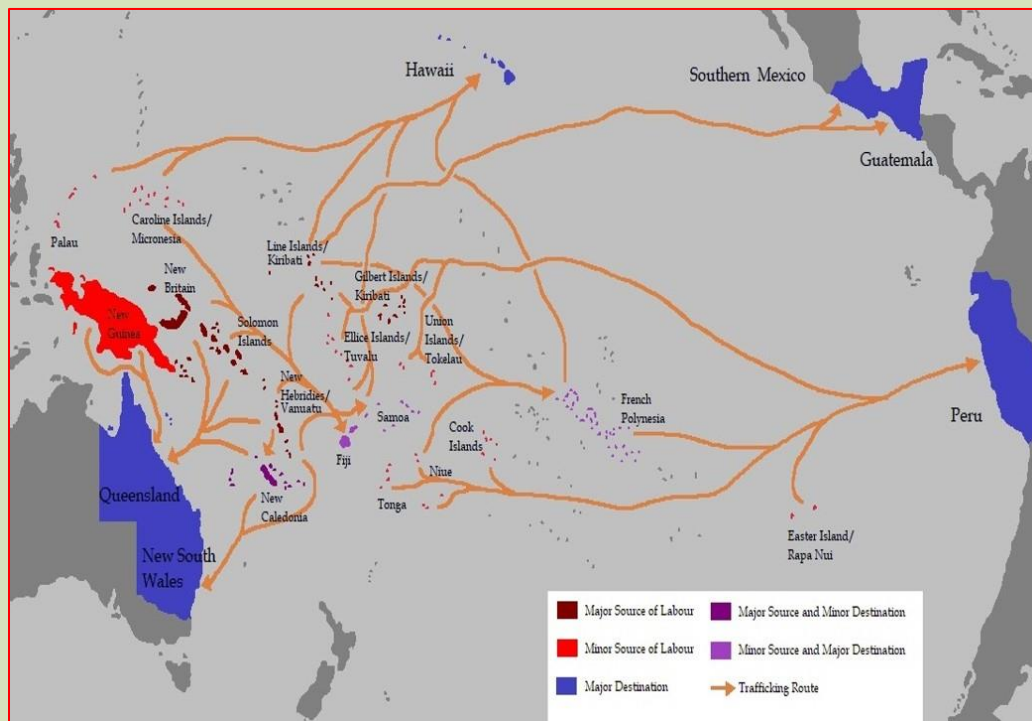


Image 1. Map of worker trafficking in the Pacific in the 19th century

The whole Pacific has been affected by labour trafficking. While Polynesia was brutally affected and fed Peru¹ and Guatemala over a relatively short period of time, Melanesia constituted a “reserve” of essential labour for Australia, Fiji and New Caledonia and to a lesser extent for Hawaii and Tahiti over a period of more than forty years.

Labour trafficking to Peru has left terrible scars in Polynesia, as Henry Evans Maude describes it: “The Peruvian slave raids of 1862-3 struck the islands of Polynesia with the force of one of the region’s *tsunamis*: the great seismic sea waves that from time to time bring death and devastation to her scattered communities. Westwards from the Peruvian port of Callao—the epicentre, as it were, of the disturbance—ships sailed through the island groups of Oceania from the Kermadecs in the south to the Gilberts on the equator and as far west as Rotuma and like the *tsunami* themselves caused most of the damage on the coral atolls and unprotected low islands, while leaving most of the high volcanic groups virtually unscathed. The repercussions, particularly on Easter Island, Niue and the coral atolls of Polynesia, have been traumatic and it would not be an exaggeration to say that no other event in the history of Polynesia has had such widespread effects throughout the region nor, on several islands, more overwhelming consequences for the islanders. Communities which found their numbers reduced by two-thirds, whether by outright kidnapping as on Nukulaelae, or by disease introduced by the kidnappers as

¹¹ Refer to H.E.Maude: *Slavers in Paradise*; available online at <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/114682>

on Rapa, or which were perhaps left as on Atafu with only a few aged or infirm men to care for the remnant of widows and orphans, had experienced not only a demographic catastrophe, but also, in all probability, the destruction of their social structure and the impairment of their cultural heritage and ethos².”

Map 2. Labour trafficking in Melanesia

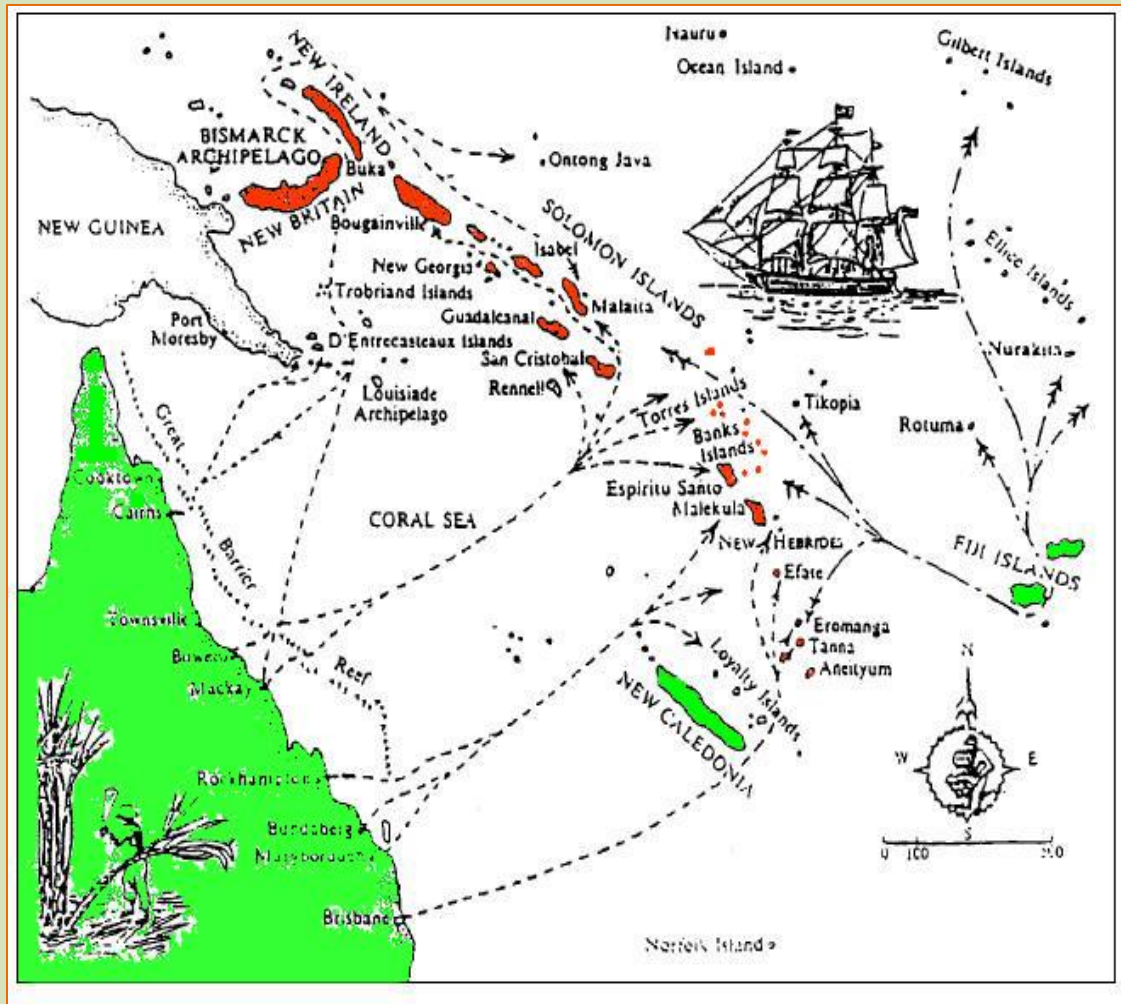


Image 2. Map of the labour traffic in Melanesia

This map was prepared by Clive Moore for the *Association of South Seas Islanders* in Australia and reproduced in *Hard Work: Australian South Sea Islander Bibliography. With a Select Bibliography of the Sugar Industry, and the Pacific Labour Trade*.

² H.E. Maude: *Slavers in Paradise*, page 19.

4. Chronological Framework

Used acronyms:

NSW	New South Wales
NH	New Hebrides
NC	New Caledonia
SLQ	State Library of Queensland

1. Early stages: 1840-1863	
1840-1850	Sandalwood traders operate from the NH to Sydney in the 1840s and 1850s, and islanders travel to Sydney as ship crews. Always a few used to work on the docks in Sydney.
1847	16.04/ 23 September and 19 October: the first 122 workers are contracted from the Loyalty Islands and the New Hebrides to work on the plantation of entrepreneur Benjamin Boyd in Eden in NSW. This initial recruitment is a disaster. Most of the workers absconded and found themselves in Sydney in extremely precarious conditions. It provokes many hostile reactions from Australian missionaries, workers, and liberals, and these workers were repatriated. Following rumours of kidnapping, an investigation is opened by Sydney Attorney General Sir Charles Fitzroy who denies the allegations. The utter failure of Mr Boyd's experiment with the South Sea Islanders is now past a doubt; and the following character of them from <i>Bell's Life in Sydney</i> is fully borne out by other authority:— These fendish-looking cannibals (the Feejee savages) have become a complete nuisance in the city. They enter, without ceremony, at every open door and demand food, clothing, and money, in a tone and manner at once impudent and threatening. Surely some means of subsistence and place of shelter ought to be furnished these unfortunate wretches by their importers, or is it the intention of these gentlemen that Government shall be at the expense of re-shipping them for the Islands? Why do not the police interfere to prevent their intrusion into the residences of the citizens? When our christian paupers are interdicted from the solicitation of public charity, is that privilege to be accorded to a horde of anthropophagi, who have been introduced into the country at the instance of a private individual? Or is it because the objects for which they were seduced from their native wilds has failed, that they are now mercilessly left to their fate by their self-created masters, and that the citizens are subjected to insult and outrage from a mob of starving, and consequently desperate intruders? <i>Image 3. The failure of the first importation of workers, 1847³.</i>
1853	⇒ 24 September: annexation of New Caledonia by France
1857	⇒ The Hamburg firm J.C. Godeffroy und Sohn, establishes an agency in Apia, Samoa. It is the first of its kind, operating as a bank, trader and exporter of copra oil. By 1860, it will "own" large coconut plantations. In December 1879, the company is to go bankrupt, transferring its

³ South Australian Register, Saturday 11 December 1847, page 2. Source: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/48544997#>

	Pacific operations to another German company (Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft or DHPG).
1860	Recruitment of nearly 60 people from the Loyalty Islands, Tanna, Erromango and Anatom by James Paddon to work in the Queensland Sea cucumber trade. Shortly thereafter, Paddon partners with Sydney businessman Robert Towns.
1861-65	The Civil War brings down American cotton production. Start of large cotton plantations in Australia and Fiji.
	2. 1863-1872: the development of the traffic
1863	⇒ 29.05: Letter from Robert Towns to the Pacific missionaries announcing his intention to recruit workers for his Queensland cotton plantations. ⇒ August: Ross Lewin, based in Tanna, recruits 67 workers for captain Robert Towns' plantations and transports them on the <i>Don Juan</i> to Queensland: Blackbirding begins. Much criticism in the newspapers. Image 4. Robert Towns (1794-1873), unknown artist Image 5. Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), Saturday 22 August 1863, page 64

⁴ Source:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/28620819?searchTerm=Don%20Juan%20from%20south%20seas%20islands>

	THE SLAVE TRADE IN QUEENSLAND Under this heading the <i>North Australian</i> of August 20, has the following remarks:— We observe in the parliamentary proceedings in the Assembly of Tuesday last, the following mysterious dialogue. "Mr. Pugh, seeing the Colonial Secretary in his place, would ask him, without previous notice, whether the South Sea Islanders lately arrived in the Don Juan, who were to be employed on Captain Towns' plantation, had been kidnapped in the manner adopted by the Peruvian vessels." "The Colonial Secretary said he made inquiry into the matter, and had been informed that they had come under distinctly signed contracts to work for one year, and then to be returned from whence they came." We say mysterious, because that was the first time we were made aware that the Slave Trade had commenced in Queensland, the repudiation of the Colonial Secretary to the contrary notwithstanding. Wishing to be enlightened on the subject we referred to our files of the <i>Courier</i>, and there find recorded the following:— "August 15.—Don Juan, schooner, 100 tons, Captain——, from Sydney." That is a lie; even the Captain was palpably so ashamed of the whole affair, that he has managed to have his name suppressed, whilst the cargo of miserable wretches are not even alluded to. We would ask any one acquainted with the usual manner of reporting vessels, whether the whole affair is not palpably rank, and stinks to heaven. We shall investigate this matter thoroughly; and Mr. Pugh should not have sat down apparently satisfied with the reply of the Colonial Secretary, which he must have known—to use a mild term—was but bunkum, used to shield a friend. We shall not be satisfied until some member of the house obtains a select committee to sift the matter to the bottom, so that we may know the circumstances under which traffic in human flesh is being carried
1864	⇒ Start of recruitment for cotton plantations in Fiji.  Image 7. Cotton plantation in Fiji circa 1875⁶.

⁵ Source: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3165212#>
⁶ National Library of New Zealand <https://natlib.govt.nz/records/23106256>

	⇒ September: 1 st resolution of the Synod of Presbyterian Churches against blackbirding. ⁷
1865	⇒ 31.05: a contract is signed between the Administration of New Caledonia and the Henry Company for the recruitment of 100 New Hebrideans: 1 st official intensive recruitment to NC. ⇒ 10.08: an order from the Governor of New Caledonia requires for any New Hebridean worker a contract of engagement to be made before the clerk of the Tribunal.
1866	⇒ 25.11: 3 sailors from the <i>Mary Jane</i> are murdered at Tanna.
1867	⇒ April: Henry Ross Lewin and other recruiters advertise in Australia for the recruitment of Oceanian workers at a rate of 7 pounds per worker.
	⇒ The <i>King Oscar</i> ⁹ (Ross Lewin) recruits in Epi: incidents. ⇒ New Caledonia: on September 20, 1867, New-Hebridean workers, Matapou, Soupesale, Souarez and Tiver are sentenced to death for the murder of Louis Pascal, their employer, his wife and two children and the worker Cambroux. They are guillotined publicly in Ducos on September 25, 1867.
1868	⇒ 02.01: Case of the <i>Syren</i> . After having recruited 110 workers in the NH and Loyalty Islands, <i>Syren</i> arrives in Brisbane in January: 12 recruits had died on board due to cold, undernutrition, lack of hygiene and dysentery. Another 12 die in quarantine.

Image 8. Ross Lewin's advertisement in the Brisbane Courier, May 3, 1867⁸

⁷ Subsequent synods systematically condemned recruitment in September 1867, May 1869, June 1870, July 1871, 1872, 1874, 1875, 1878 and 1882.

⁸ Source: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/1283588#>

⁹ He set up an ambush in a village and 20 men and women were captured and "recruited", while in Aniwa he tricked another group onto the ship, convincing them he was taking them to the nearby missionary outpost. The *King Oscar* returned to Queensland in November 1867 with 225 workers and shortly thereafter made a second trip with 282 people. Ross-Lewin sold these people for an average of £9 per head and made about £2,000 in profits. In 1868, Ross-Lewin chartered the *Spunkie*, a ship that appeared to be a missionary ship, and made other recruitment voyages. He often drew the islanders aboard by leading the crew to pretend to be missionaries or more simply by breaking their canoes and getting them out of the water.

	⇒ : February: the <i>Lytton</i>, captain George Smith, recruits in Erromango and is officially accused by the Reverend Mc Nair of recruiting by force¹⁰. ⇒ 04.03: <i>Polynesian Labourers Act</i>¹¹. This law, whose objective was to «regulate and control the recruitment and the treatment of Polynesian workers» actually endorses the trafficking and structure it. ⇒ Mid-November: The <i>Young Australian</i> recruits at Paama and kills three people. The trial will take place in 1869.
1869	⇒ 5.02: 793 workers have arrived in New Caledonia since 10.08.1865. ⇒ June: trial in Sydney of the <i>Daphne</i>¹², boarded by HMS Rosario, with 100 New Hebrideans illegally on board. The <i>Daphne</i> is found not guilty. <i>Image 9. HMS Rosario, engraving, 1889</i>¹³

¹⁰ The Reverend Mac Nair sent a complaint to Commodore Lambert of the Australian Navy with a copy to the mission in Scotland. The case went up to the Colonial Office. An investigation was opened and meetings were held in Sydney and Brisbane in February and March 1839. This was the first complaint from a Presbyterian pastor.

¹¹ This law defined the concept of a contract of 3 years for a salary of 6 pounds payable at the end of the contract. It also defined the food rations onboard ships and on plantations as well as the provision of clothing. The *committed* could extend their contract for an additional three years.

¹² In 1868, Ross-Lewin partnered with Thomas Pritchard and bought an old ship called the *Daphne* to serve as a recruiting vessel for the Queensland market. The first voyage reached Brisbane at the end of 1868. Onboard was a thirteen-year-old girl from Tanna who had been Ross-Lewin's concubine. She was sold to a plantation owner for £20 and Ross-Lewin was accused of raping her. He appeared before the police court in Brisbane, but was acquitted.

¹³ Engraving from: *The boy travellers in Australasia: adventures of two youths in a journey to the Sandwich, Marquesas, Society, Samoan and Feejee islands, and through the colonies of New Zealand, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia* **Year:** 1889 (1880s) **Authors:** Knox, Thomas Wallace, 1835-1896, Harper & Brothers.

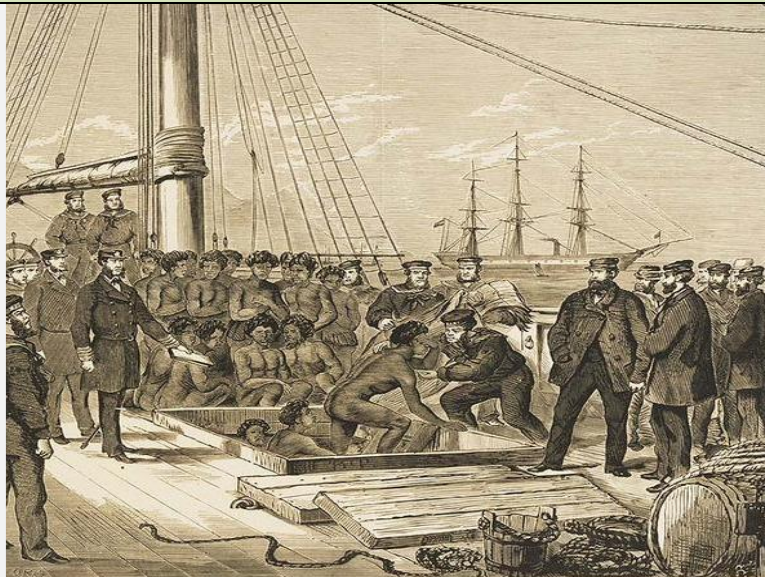


Image 10. Seizure of the *Daphne*, 1869, engraving, National Library of Australia

⇒ The New South Wales Government establishes a Royal Commission to investigate kidnapping cases in the Loyalty Islands and the NH¹⁴.

⇒ February: Citizens of Sydney petition to the Queensland Parliament requesting a reconsideration of the *Polynesian Labour Act*. The petition calls for the abolition of kidnapping, a more supervised recruitment and treatment system for recruits and a review of salaries. The petition generates many debates in the press and is rejected by the Queensland Parliament¹⁵.

1870

⇒ The Queensland Government decides to appoint Government Agents (representatives) to oversee recruitment operations.

⇒ April: April: Auckland's *Lulu* reaches Anatom to recruit. The inhabitants refuse contact, and so the ship continues towards Tanna, which it reaches on April 9. Many men embark on the boat to trade, but they refuse offers of recruitment, so the *Lulu* sails on to Efate, which he reached on the 13th. But the locals here, too, refuse recruitment, telling the crew of the *Lulu* that they had been mistreated after travelling to Australia to work.

Two men from Tanna and one from Efate join the ship as interpreters, and the chiefs of Efate agree to provide recruits in exchange for rewards. The *Lulu* meets a schooner from Sydney, the *Zephyr*, which tries unsuccessfully to recruit for the Fiji cane fields, then moves north, through Ambrym, Malekula and Pentecost. At Pentecost, crew members disembark to try to recruit, but must retreat when arrows are fired at them. They escape without injury, and the *Lulu* returns to Efate. On April 27, in Havannah, nine men board the ship. Twelve men join the boat in Mele, and two in Pango. This recruitment to New Zealand provokes much opposition.¹⁶

¹⁴ The Commission acknowledged that isolated cases of kidnapping had occurred but that "the strongest desire is manifested by the natives, both of the Loyalty and the New Hebrides group, to leave their home, either to serve on board English ships, or to labour on the plantations of Queensland; and that any attempt to kidnap them would be not only unnecessary, but most impolitic, and even dangerous." Quoted from K.R. Howe: *Tourists, Sailors and Labourers*, *Journal of the Pacific History*, p35.

¹⁵ Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser (Qld.: 1861 - 1871), Thursday 8 April 1869, page 2; <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/51575446?afterLoad=showCorrections>

¹⁶ <https://vanuatudigest.wordpress.com/2016/09/04/untold-tale-new-hebridean-labourers-new-zealand-19th-century/> <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/DSC18700524.2.37.1?query=captain%20ponsonby%20lulu> and <http://readingthemaps.blogspot.com/2015/06/savage-garbage-gatherers-new-zealand.html>



Image 11. A flax worker from the New Hebrides in the Hokianga region of New Zealand, 1872, photographed by Daniel Mundy¹⁷

⇒ December: The *Wild Duck* recruits in Santo: 5 sailors are killed.

1871

⇒ 11.01: Memorandum from Bishop Patteson, *South Sea Island Labour Traffic*, for the General Synod of the Anglican Church in New Zealand.

⇒ 25.01: Fiji establishes a regulation on the introduction of Melanesian workers.

⇒ 13.02: The Reverend John Paton sends a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* denouncing against the *Lyttona's* activities and accusing the *Spunkie*, captain Ross Lewin, of kidnapping.

⇒ 09.07: The recruiter *Fanny* is attacked in Nguna: 1 survivor. Repression in November by *HMS Rosario*.

⇒ July: The *Carl* recruits by force in Epi, Paama, Tanna, and Malekula, then leaves for the Solomons and Buka: the recruits trying to mutiny are murdered. 40 killed are thrown into the sea along with the wounded.

⇒ The crew of the recruiter *Wild Duck* is massacred in Santo. Repression on December 16 by *HMS Rosario*.

⇒ May: trial of captain Alexander Longmuir for illegal recruitment. He is sentenced to 2 years in prison in Sydney.

⇒ April - December: conviction of the *Jason*. The *Jason* had on board one of the first government agents, John Micklejohn. In Ambrym, they had destroyed 2 pirogues and captured 10 people including a 6-year-old child. Micklejohn is, on the outskirts of Malekula, handcuffed and chained. The captain of the ship is sentenced to 5 years in prison but will be released after 1 year.

⇒ 09.11 – January 1872: 1st Campaign of *HMS Rosario*, captain Albert Markham¹⁸.

¹⁷ Source: <https://vanuatudigest.wordpress.com/2016/09/04/untold-tale-new-hebridean-labourers-new-zealand-19th-century/>

¹⁸ Cf. Albert Markham: *The cruise of the Rosario*: 09.11 was in sight of Anatom, in Port Havannah on 12. From 27.11 to 03.12 was in the Solomons. Returned to the NH by the Banks on 06.12, 15 was in Santo. Spent Christmas in Port-Sandwich, 27.12 was in Pentecost and then in Maewo. Returned to Port Havannah on 31.12 and then went to Erromango on 02.01.1872. Aniwa and Futuna on 03.01 and Tanna on 05.01.



Image 12. HMS Rosario at Maewo¹⁹

3. 1872-1880: The intensive period	
1872	⇒ 27.06: Pacific Islanders protection act²⁰. ⇒ October to February 1872: <i>HMS Rosario</i>²¹ visits the NH. ⇒ 01.08-09.09: passage of the <i>Basilisk</i> commanded by John Moresby. ⇒ John Inglis publishes: <i>The slave trade in the New Hebrides</i> for the Aniwa Presbyterian Mission annual conference ⇒ Establishment of the German company Godefroy in Apia.
1874	⇒ Murder of recruiter Ross Lewin at Tanna. ⇒ New Caledonia: decree of 26 March on the management of recruits in the territory. ⇒ 25.07: the <i>Daphne</i>, the <i>Zephyr</i> and the <i>Leolia</i> are at Epi for recruitment. A <i>Zephyr</i> canoe is attacked and occupants are massacred. Repression in September by <i>HMS Sandfly</i>. ⇒ 02.08: the recruiter <i>Lyttona</i> is attacked at Loh in the Torres: 2 dead including the Government Agent. ⇒ March: annexation of Fiji by the United Kingdom.
1875	⇒ 22.04 – 07.05: Commodore Goodenough's 1st campaign to oversee recruitment. ⇒ 21.07 – 09.08: Commodore Goodenough's 2nd journey. ⇒ New Caledonia: Governor Pritzbuere's decree concerning recruitment. This order stipulates that labour ships must pass an inspection before leaving, that ships cannot be less than 40 tons and must be in good condition. A recruit quota is set based on the characteristics of the vessel.
1876	⇒ Petition of 500 European workers to the Queensland Parliament against the recruitment of island workers considered as competitors.
1877	⇒ The Reverend MacDonald publishes: <i>The labour traffic versus Christianity in the South Sea Islands</i>.
1878	⇒ 15.01-26.02: French-English Agreement: both countries affirm their intention not to annex the archipelago.

¹⁹ Engraving from Markham's work, page 202.

²⁰ This act defined kidnapping and advised the captains of the navy on what to do. Like the *Polynesian Act*, it would prove to have limited effect.

²¹ Captain Markham: see: *The cruise of the Rosario*.

	⇒ September: a sailor and a crew member of the <i>May Queen</i> are killed at Pentecost. ⇒ 03.11: murder of captain James Martin of the recruiter <i>Heather Bell</i> at Ambae. The 4th, <i>Mystery's</i> longboat is also attacked and 10 men are killed.²²
	 <i>Image 13. The Mystery at Mackay in 1870²³.</i>
1879	⇒ July: the recruiter <i>Angus Donald</i> loses 10 men in Batnapi in Pentecost. ⇒ May: Russian explorer Miklouho-Maclay on the <i>Sadie Calder</i> explores the NH: on his return, he protests to the English authorities against illegal recruitment. ⇒ 20.05: <i>HMS Wolverine</i> represses at Ambae following the murder of James Martin. ⇒ 18.06: Murder at Pentecost of captain George Simpson of the <i>Agnes Donald</i> and of 3 crew members. Retaliation from the <i>Conflict</i> in July. ⇒ October: murder of the captain of the <i>Mavis</i> at Tanna.
4. 1880-1901: Towards the end of the recruitment	
1880	⇒ July 1880-March 1881: <i>Pomare's</i> first recruitment campaign for the plantations in Hawaii. ⇒ August 25: appointment in New Caledonia of a commission of inquiry to verify the kidnapping charges against Caledonian recruiting vessels. This commission, appointed by Governor Courbet, is to investigate the actions of the <i>Lulu</i>, the <i>Aurora</i> and the <i>Venus</i> in response to a complaint lodged by Rear Admiral Wilson with the British consul in Noumea. While the <i>Lulu</i> is quickly cleared because it is no longer part of the traffic, the case of the <i>Aurora</i> and the <i>Venus</i> is more important. Despite the evidence brought by the recruits, the <i>Aurora</i> is exonerated. The <i>Venus</i> trial will take place in 1882, only to result in the same verdict. ⇒ Enactment of the <i>Pacific Islands Labourer Act</i> in Queensland. It will be revised in 1884, 1885 et 1886. ⇒ August: murder of the crew of the <i>Dauntless</i> at Epi. Retaliation by <i>HMS Wolverine</i>.

²² The chief of this Ambae area, Sikeri, had, following the incidents with the *Heather Bell*, declared that all white people who landed were to be killed – a statement that the *Mystery* obviously did not know of. Returning by Ambae in April, captain Kilgour of the *Mystery* believed he had regained the village of Sikeri, which he burned down. Arrested in the Solomon Islands, he was fined 100 pounds. The captain of the *Heather Bell* was also sentenced in another trial to a fine and six months in prison.

²³ Clive Moore Collection from Moore: *Sugaropolis*.



Image 14. HMS Wolverine and HMS Dart, 1880/1890²⁴

	⇒ October: captain Mac Millan and a few crew members from the <i>Idaho</i> are killed at Santo. ⇒ November: the <i>Jabberwock</i> is attacked at Tanna.
1881	⇒ The Governor of Fiji informs British subjects established in the islands that they must register their property titles in Australia or Fiji if they wish the protection of England. The Governor may also authorize the recruitment of workers placed under the protection of an English stationary.
1882	⇒ September: establishment in Noumea of the Compagnie calédonienne des NH (CCNH) by John Higginson. The company charters the <i>Ne Oblie</i>, which in November sails to “buy” land in the NH. ⇒ 30.06: New Caledonia: ministerial order prohibiting all Oceanian immigration. ⇒ The blackbirder <i>Clara</i> operates at Santo. The crew of the <i>Taveuni</i> is massacred in retaliation. ⇒ The <i>Roderick Dhu</i> and the <i>Helena</i> fail in their attempts to bring recruits back from Paama and Epi²⁵. ⇒ The <i>Ceara</i> recruits 438 people at Anatom. ⇒ The <i>Lizzie</i>, BP²⁶'s ship, recruits at Ambrym. A few days later, the captain of the <i>Borough Belle</i> is killed in retaliation for the activities of the <i>Lizzie</i>. ⇒ Modest beginnings at Fairymead's of the <i>Queensland Kanaka Mission</i>²⁷. The first converts (1885-86) are all from Ambae.

²⁴ Source: <https://collection.maas.museum/object/459216>

²⁵ The *Roderick Dhu* arrived in Maryborough on 29 October 1892 with 103 recruits, the same as at the outset.

²⁶ Founded in the 1870s by James Burns and Robert Philp, BP quickly became one of the largest shipping and trade companies in the Pacific, established in Papua New Guinea (1890-91), Tonga (1899), Samoa (1912) and Fiji (1916). BP moved to the NH in 1896.

²⁷ Created by Florence Young, the Queensland Kanaka Mission operated until 1906. In 1899 it operated six centres: Fairymead, North Bundaberg, Kalkie, Hapsberg, Gingin and Avondale.



Image 15. Mrs Eustace with converts, Bundaberg, photograph taken after 1887.

⇒ The NH Presbyterian Church sends a petition to the British Prime Minister calling for the annexation of the NH by the United Kingdom in order to protect the inhabitants from the abuses of recruiters.

1883

⇒ April: the *Julia* recruits for the plantations in Hawaii.
 ⇒ 26 December: clashes between plantation workers and planters in Mackay: two workers killed.²⁸

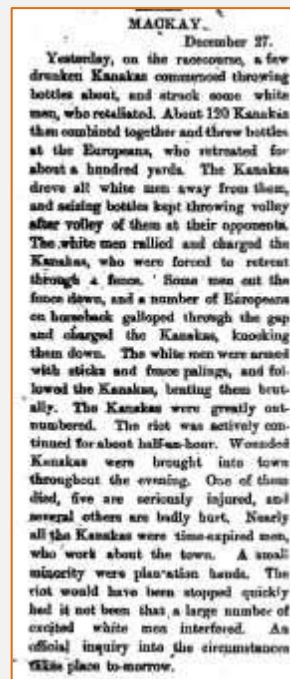


Image 16. "Riots" in Mackay, the Northern Miner, 28.02.1883, pg2²⁹

²⁸ On this event see: Moore, C. R. (1978). *The Mackay Racecourse Riot of 1883*. Lectures on North Queensland History: Third series. Townsville, Qld: James Cook University, History Dept.181-196. The one-hour clashes were due to alcohol abuse.

²⁹ Source: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/77189194#>

⇒ Captain Belbin of the *Borough Bell*, a Queensland recruiting vessel, is killed in Ambrym. *HMS Dart* retaliates, losing a man.



Image 17. The HMS Dart in Sydney, 1880/1890³⁰

⇒ A deputation of various religious societies asks the Lords Derby and Granville for protection for the inhabitants of the archipelago and the suppression of abuses of trafficking.

1884

⇒ 10.03: *Pacific Islanders Amendment Bill*.

⇒ Queensland: a law confines the South Pacific Islanders to agricultural work except for the workers present in the colony for over 5 years.

1885

⇒ New Caledonia: cases of *Idaho* and *Ambrona* which illegally recruit in the NH.

1886

⇒ December 1886-January 1887: return by the *Allie Rowe* of 125 workers who were recruited for the plantations of Hawaii.

⇒ The *Madeleine* runs aground at Malo with all its workers who will be further transported to Queensland by the *Hector*.



³⁰ Source: <https://collection.maas.museum/object/31518>

	 <i>Image 18. The Madeleine aground at Malo with its workers³¹.</i>
1887	⇒ January: the <i>Elsinore</i> of Hawaii drops its workers in Havannah while most are from Malekula. ⇒ 10.03 – 03.04: Monitoring campaign of the <i>Volta</i>, French military ship. ⇒ 16.11: Establishment of the Joint Naval Commission. ⇒ 24.01: The recruiter <i>Sibyl</i> sinks off Malekula.
1888	⇒ 26.01: Signing of the declaration and regulations of the Joint Naval Commission. ⇒ 28.04: 1st meeting of the Joint Naval Commission on board the <i>HMS Diamond</i>. The Commission effectively operates from the 1st of March. ⇒ Beginning of the <i>Presbyterian Kanaka Mission</i> in Mackay hosted by the Reverend McIntyre.  <i>Image 19. Rev McIntyre at the presbyterian mission in Walkerston³²</i>
1889	⇒ Publication in London of the <i>Autobiography</i> of John G. Paton and of Gilbert Bishop's novel <i>The Beachcomber's, or slave trading under the Union Jack</i> .
1890	⇒ 24-28.06: strike of 27 Melanesian workers at the Woodlands sugar plantation in Marburg. Nine leaders are arrested and fined 9 shillings³³.

³¹ Photograph from Douglas Rannie; p 270.

³² Photograph from Clive Moore: *Making Mala*:

<https://pressfiles.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n2401/html/ch03.xhtml>

³³ Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser (Qld.: 1861 - 1908), Saturday 28 June 1890, page 5;

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/125080468?searchTerm=Woodlands%20Sugar%20Plantation%20Marburg%201890#>



Image 20. Workers near Marbug, circa 1895, SLQ

1891

⇒ 01.01: The Government of Queensland prohibits the use of Melanesian labour.
 ⇒ An Australian survey reveals that there are still 9,362 Oceanian workers in Queensland and that about 46,382 workers have been introduced since the beginning of *Blackbirding*.



Image 21. Portrait of a group of workers in front of a sugar mill, Hambledon, Queensland, circa 1891, John Oxley Library

⇒ October: 60 island workers strike at the Robb and Co sugar mill in Cudgen for increased wages³⁴.

³⁴ The outcome of this strike is not known.

It appears that the kanakas are profiting by the example of their white brethren, and have learned to "strike." A telegram from the Tweed River published in Wednesday's *S. M. Herald* states that sixty kanakas, employed at Robb and Co.'s sugar-mill at Cudgen, struck work on Tuesday for increased wages. They are receiving £1 per week and found, and now demand an increase of 5s. per week.

Image 22. Strike at Cudgen, 1891³⁵

1892	⇒ 12.02: The Queensland Government suspends the 1891 ban for a period of 10 years. <i>Blackbirding</i> resumes. ⇒ March: The Reverend John G Paton publishes <i>The Kanaka Labour Traffic to Queensland – Protest against its renewal</i> and in May <i>Slavery under the British Flag</i> ⇒ 8.10: The recruiter Pasnin (New Caledonia) of the <i>Constantine</i> and all his crew, as well as the owner, Genin, are murdered. Repression by the French escort vessel <i>Scorff</i>. ⇒ December: Proctor affair³⁶.
1893	⇒ January: the recruiting ship <i>Empreza</i> returning from Queensland brings dysentery to Futuna: 133 dead³⁷.
1895	⇒ William Gray³⁸: <i>The Kanaka or how the Queensland Planters get and treat their -</i>

³⁵ The Queenslander; Sat 10 Oct 1891; page 714:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/20296785?searchTerm=Kanaka%20%20Cudgen%201891#>

³⁶ James Proctor was an American seaman recruiter. In 1892, he killed in cold blood a Melanesian who came to claim his wife, whom Proctor had abused. He was handed over to the English courts and sentenced for a mere short time since he was seen again in the NH in 1894.

³⁷ When it left Brisbane on 12.01, some workers were already suffering from dysentery but no medical checks had been completed. Some sources give a total of 200 deaths.

³⁸ The Reverend William Gray was moderator of the South Australian Presbyterian Church. He had been ordained in 1882 and, at the beginning of his career, had been a missionary in the New Hebrides, living on the island of Tanna for about thirteen years. It was during this period of his life that he saw first-hand the practice of recruitment and its impact on the lives of those involved. He undertook extensive research on labour recruitment during this period and later, when he returned to South Australia and was able to use it in the writing and publication of this work.

	Indictment of the Traffic.—My indictment of the Queensland Kanaka Labour Traffic is this:— 1. It generally demoralises and always impoverishes the kanaka, deprives him of his citizenship, and depopulates the islands fitted to his home. 2. It is felt to lower the dignity of the white agricultural labourer in Queensland, and beyond a doubt it lowers his wages there. 3. The whole system is fraught with danger to Australia and the islands on the score of health. 4. On social and political grounds the continuance of the Queensland Kanaka Labour Traffic must be a barrier to the true federation of the Australian colonies. 5. The Regulations under which the Traffic exists in Queensland are inadequate to prevent abuses, and in the nature of things they must remain so. 6. The whole system is contrary to the spirit and doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel requires us to help the weak, but the kanaka is fleeced and trodden down. 7. The bed-rock of this Traffic is that the life and liberty of a black man is of less value than those of a white man. And a traffic that has grown out of "slave-hunting" will certainly remain to the end not unlike its origin. THE END. Image 23. Conclusions of Gray's work³⁹
1896	⇒ 14.08: The <i>Caroline</i> (New Caledonia) on a recruitment tour has problems with missionary H.L. Paton.
1899	⇒ April: the schooner <i>Aoba</i> (New Caledonia) recruits with dishonest methods.
1901	⇒ 17.12: <i>The Commonwealth Act, Regulation, Restriction and Prohibition of the Introduction of Labourers from the Pacific Islands: Prohibition of Labour Importation into Australia</i> ⁴⁰ . This law, which was part of a broader white Australian policy, makes it illegal to import South Sea workers after March 1904 and opts for the forced deportation of all islanders in Australia after 1906.
1904	⇒ Start of repatriation of workers from Queensland: 7068 workers are repatriated between 1904 and 1908; 194 between 1909 and 1914.
1906	⇒ Forced deportations begin. 1200 South Sea Islanders are allowed to stay; 1000 remain illegally. Image 24. Workers awaiting deportation, Cairns, 1906, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

³⁹ Source: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-401328373/view?partId=nla.obj-401396039#page/n3/mode/1up>

⁴⁰ This decree specified that no Oceanian workers could enter Queensland from 31.03.1904, that no commitment could be maintained after 31.12.1906 and that Oceanian workers remaining in Queensland at the end of 1906 should be deported. It is estimated that just over 62,000 Oceanians lived and worked in Queensland between 1863 and 1906. 16,000 died or disappeared. 1600 were allowed to stay in Australia.

5. Data on Blackbirding

The following sets of data were compiled from the following studies:

Bennett Judith A: <i>Immigration, 'Blackbirding', Labour Recruiting? The Hawaiian Experience, 1877-1887; Journal of Pacific History</i> 7 (1/2); 1976; 3-27.
Corris Peter: <i>Pacific Island Labour Migrants in Queensland; Journal of Pacific History</i> 5; 1970; 43-61.
Firth Stewart: <i>Compagnie et consulat: lois germaniques et emploi des travailleurs sur les plantations de Samoa, 1864-1914."</i> <i>Journal de la Société des Océanistes</i> ; 1990; 115-34
Newbury Colin: <i>The Melanesian Labor Reserve: Some reflections on Pacific Labor markets in the Nineteenth Century; Pacific Studies</i> 19804 (1) (Fall): 1-25.
Price, Charles A., and Baker Elizabeth: <i>Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A research note; Journal of Pacific History</i> ; 197611 (1/2): pp.106-21.
Shineberg, Dorothy: <i>La Main-d'oeuvre néo-hébridaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie 1865-1930</i> ; translated from english by Beatrice Atherton, Nouvelle-Calédonie: Société d'Etudes Historiques, 2003, 440 p.
Shlomowitz, Ralph: <i>Time-Expired Melanesian Labor in Queensland: An investigation of job turnover 1884-1906; Pacific Studies</i> 8 (2) 1985 (Spring); pp25-44.
Siegel Jeff: <i>Origins of Pacific Islands Labourers in Fiji; Journal of Pacific History</i> 20 (1): 1985; pp. 42-54.
Moore, Clive: <i>Sugaropolis: The Mackay-Pacific Islands People Trade Voyage Statistics, 1867–1903</i> ; University of Queensland; September 2020; 60p.

Important note: the most complete datasets are from Australia; the most incomplete are from New Caledonia and Samoa. In general, it is not possible to consider these data to be absolutely accurate but, given the state of the sources, they are extremely valuable estimates.

-MASTER PACIFIC ISLANDERS EMPLOYED AT 2							Honolulu	
NAME OF ISLANDER	DATE OF ENTRY	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF DEPARTURE	DATE OF DEPARTURE	
10 You	A few	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
22 Kapiwawa	Aoba	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
23 Telly Hapoo	Malaga	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
30 Kapiwawa	Aoba	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
7 Day Day	Malaga	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
22 Kapiwawa	Aoba	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
76 Kapiwawa	Aoba	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
7 Tom Day	Malaga	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	
5 Miller	Aoba	Sept 10	16	20	26	1920	16	

Image 25. Register of Pacific islanders employed at Pioneer Sugar Mill⁴¹

⁴¹ Source: James Cook University: <https://nqheritage.jcu.edu.au/416/>

Particulars			Legally Free			Native & Settlers									
No.	Name of Ship	Date of Arrival	Boys	Men	Women	Native	Settlers	Boys	Men	Women	Native	Settlers	Boys	Men	Women
1868															
1	Shamrock	June 2	18	38	5	29	33	6	5						
2	Indra	July 3													
3	Lyttelton	July 21	4	20	2	18	30								
4	Shamrock	August 22	1	7		17	3	7	2						
5	Shamrock	September 17													
6	Lyttelton	November 3	7	24	4	27	18								
7	Shamrock	December 18													
8	Shamrock	December 31													
Total Recruits in 1868			30	99	9	2	90	50	47	27	8	2			

Image 26. Register of workers' arrivals in Australia, 1868-1881⁴²

Image 27. Polynesian Immigrants Records, 1876-1914⁴³

5.1. Overview

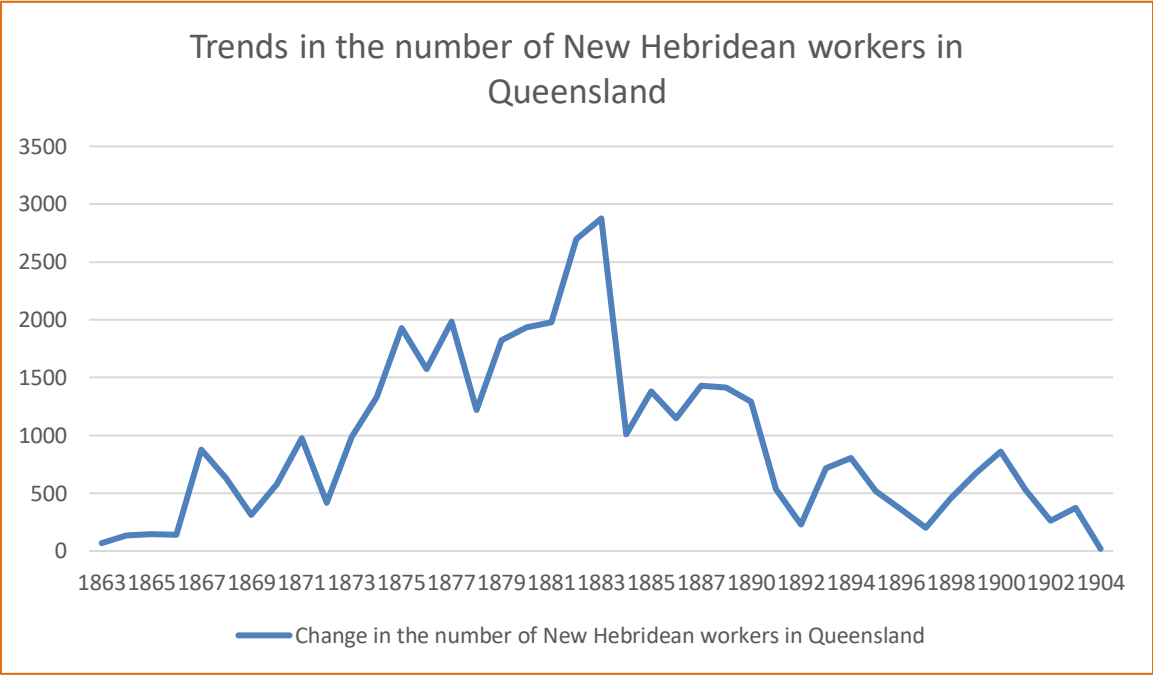
Country of destination	Date	Estimated number of workers from the New Hebrides
Australia	1863-1901	Queensland: 39 931 NSW: 70
New Zealand	1870	27
Fiji	1864-1911	14 198
Samoa	1865-1913	1 201
New Caledonia	1865-1900	12 596
Hawaii	1880-1886	245

⁴² Queensland Archives: <https://www.archivessearch.qld.gov.au/items/ITM6045>

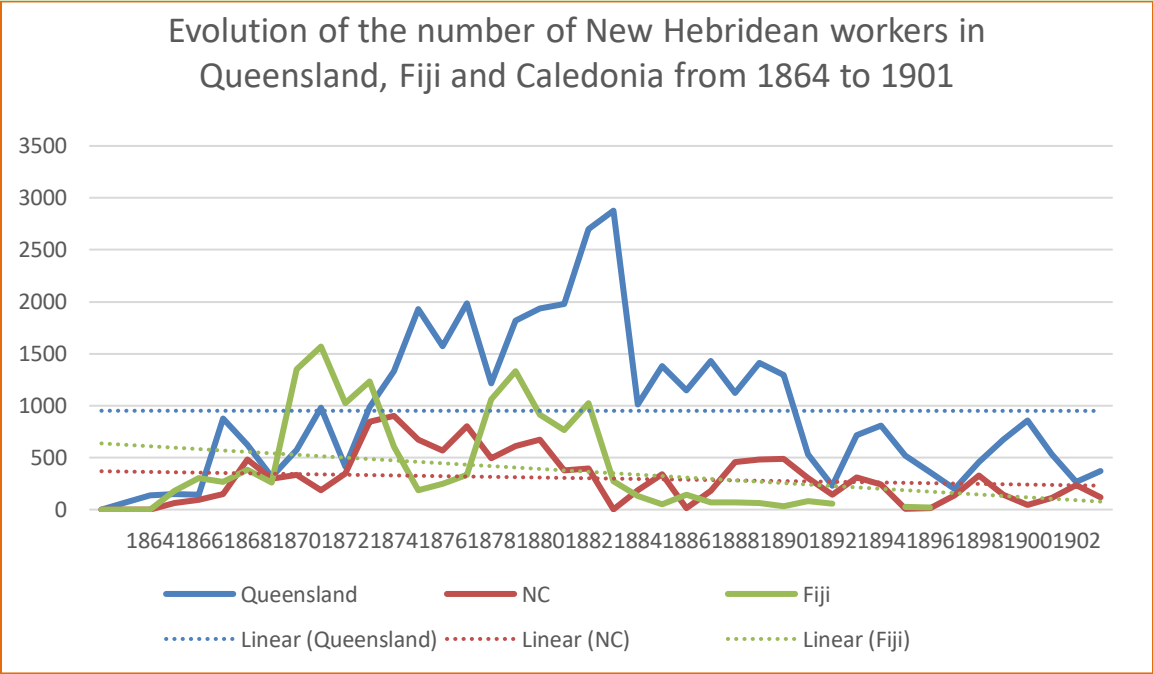
⁴³ Source: National Archives of Fiji: <https://mowcaparchives.org/items/show/100#&gid=1&pid=2>

Tahiti	1870-1892	241
Total		68 509

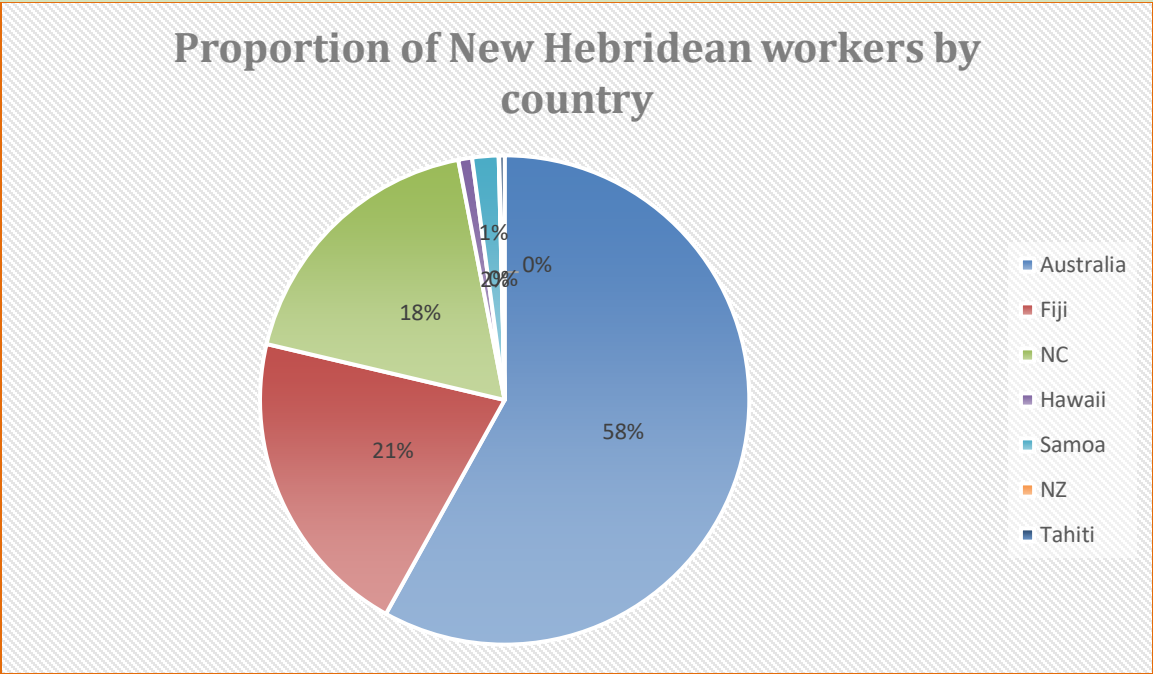
5.2. Trends in the number of New Hebridean workers in Queensland



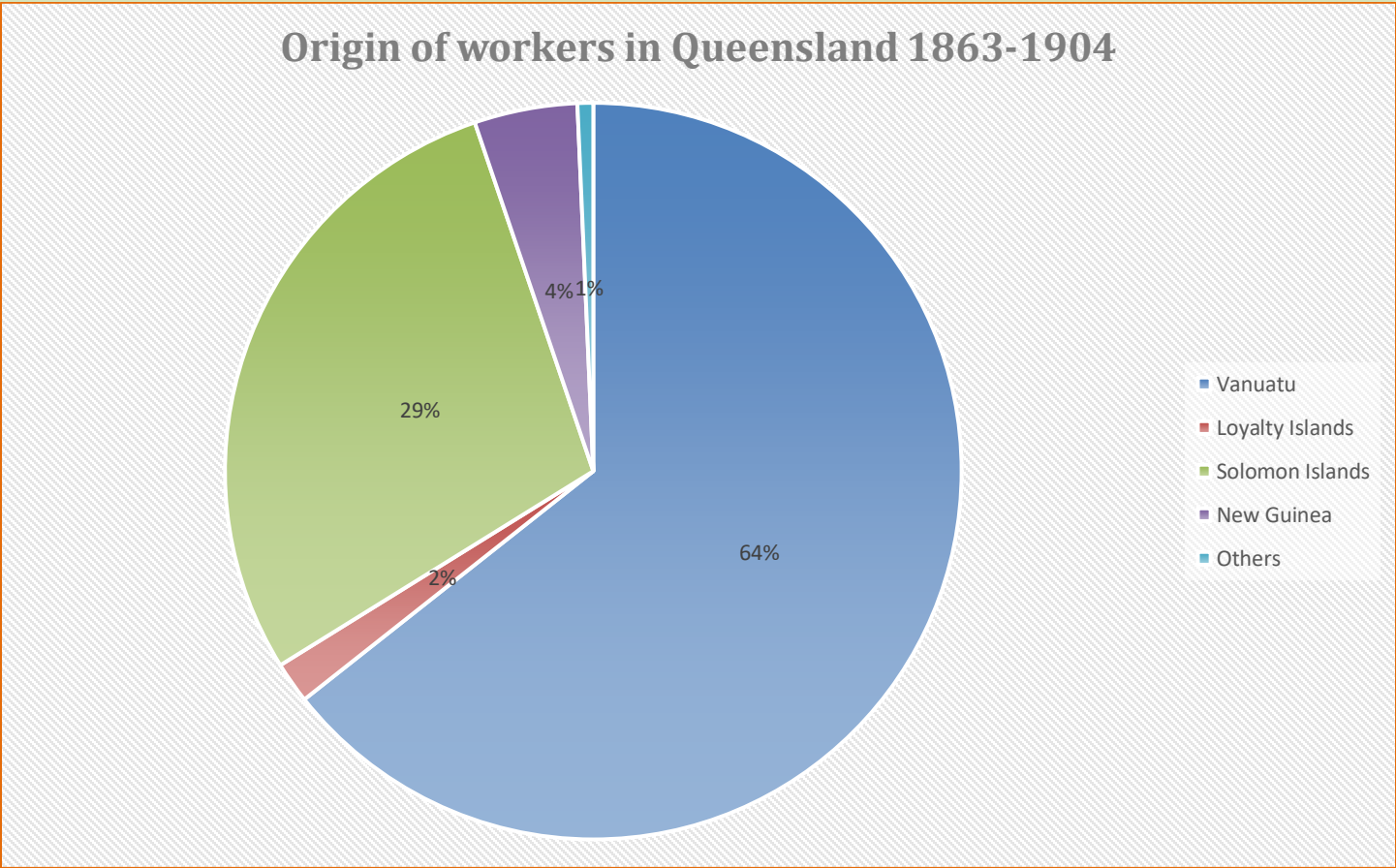
5.3. Trends in the number of New Hebridean workers in Queensland, Fiji and Caledonia from 1864 to 1901



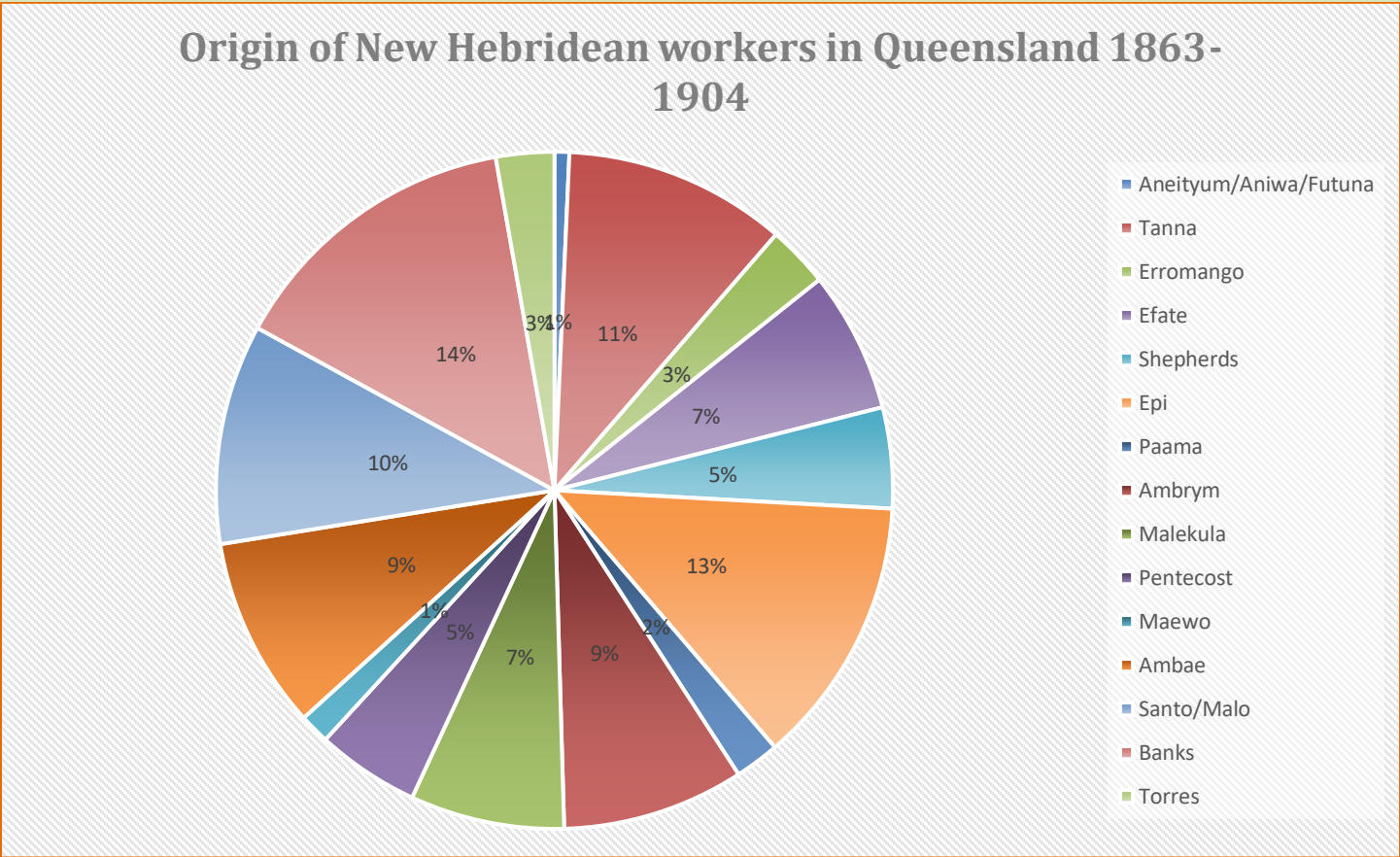
5.4. Destination of New Hebridean workers by country



5.5. Origin of Oceanian workers in Queensland



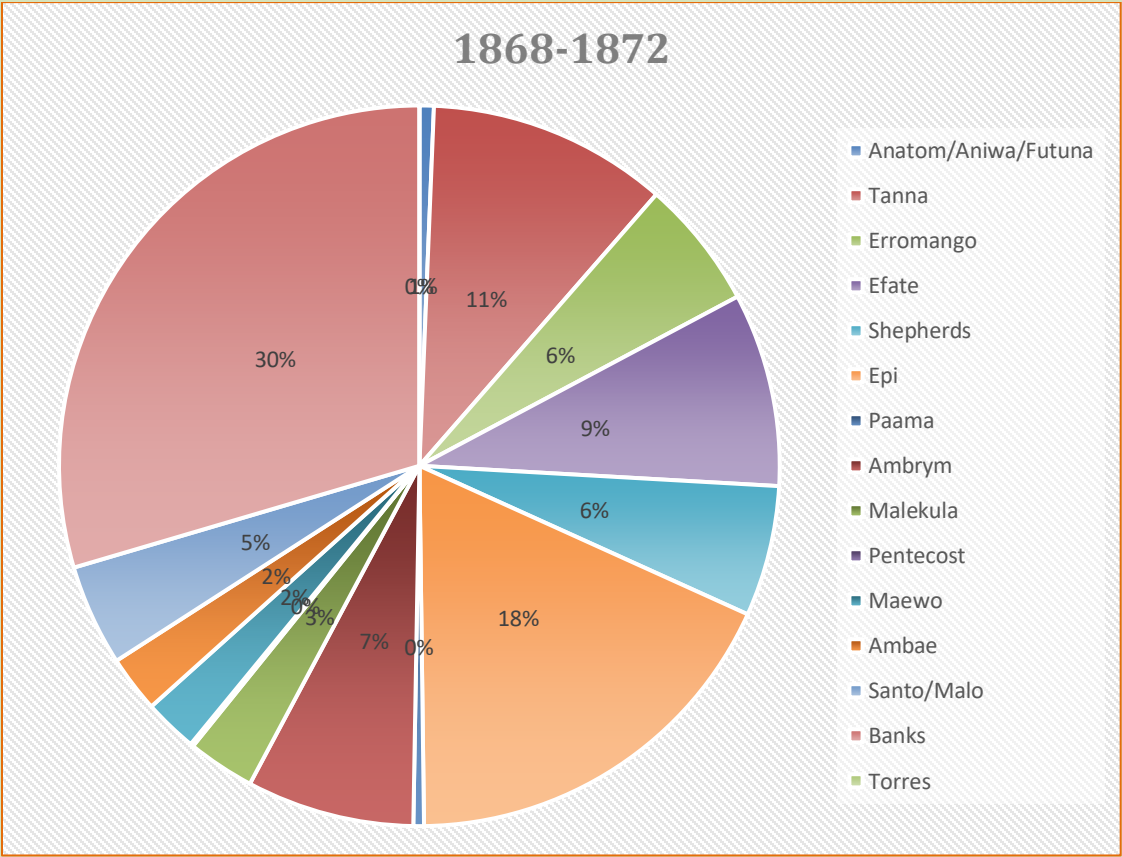
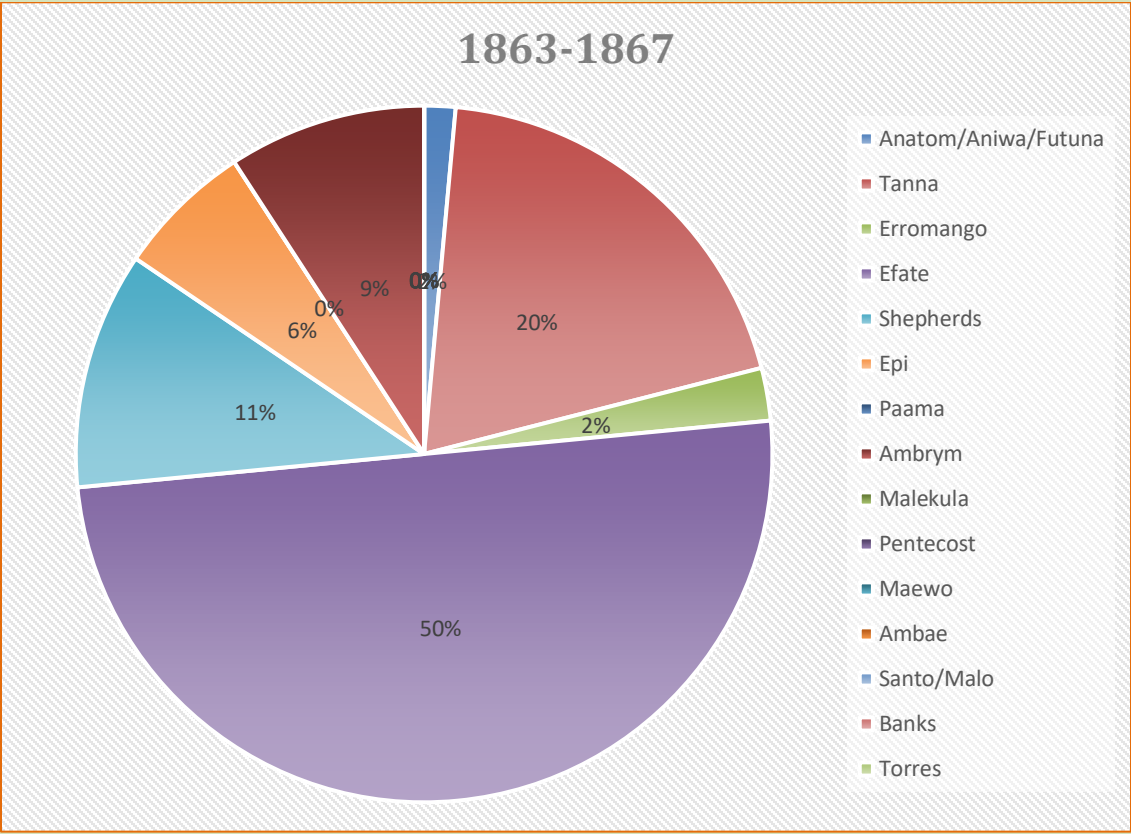
5.6. Origin of New Hebridean workers in Queensland by islands from 1863 to 1904⁴⁴



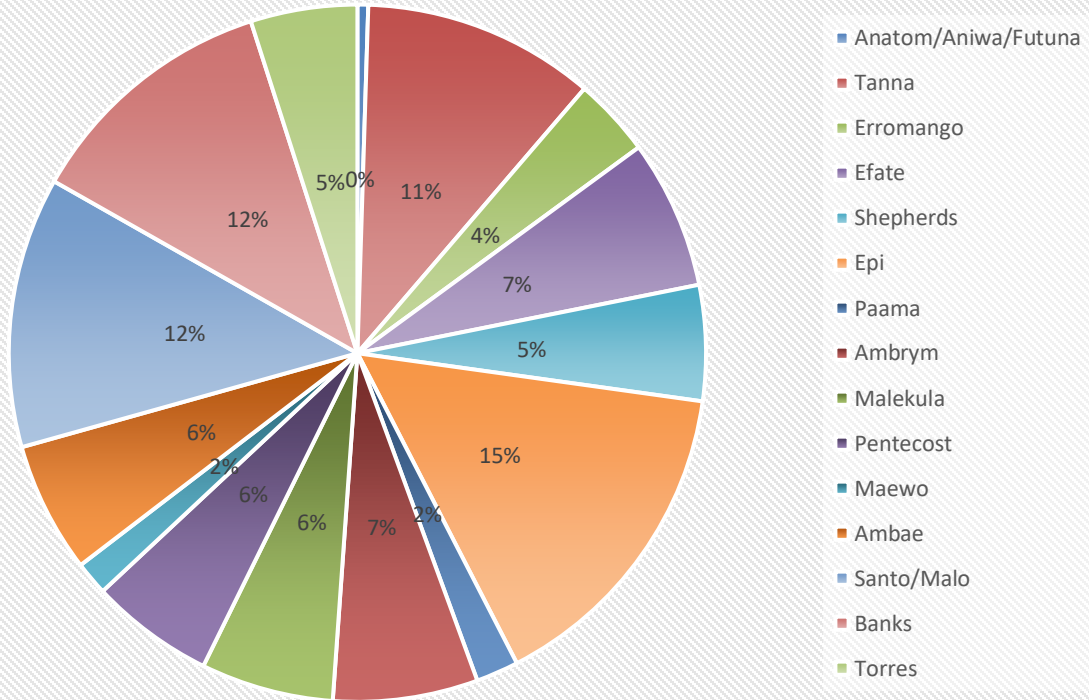
⁴⁴ For graphs 5.6 to 5.8, data for some islands have been aggregated as follows: 'Efate' includes Nguna, Pele, Moso, Emao and Retoka (mentioned several times); 'Shepherds' includes Tongoa, Emae and the surrounding small islands; 'Santo/Malo' also includes the small surrounding islands; 'Malekula' includes the Maskelynes, Toman and other islands northeast of Malekula.

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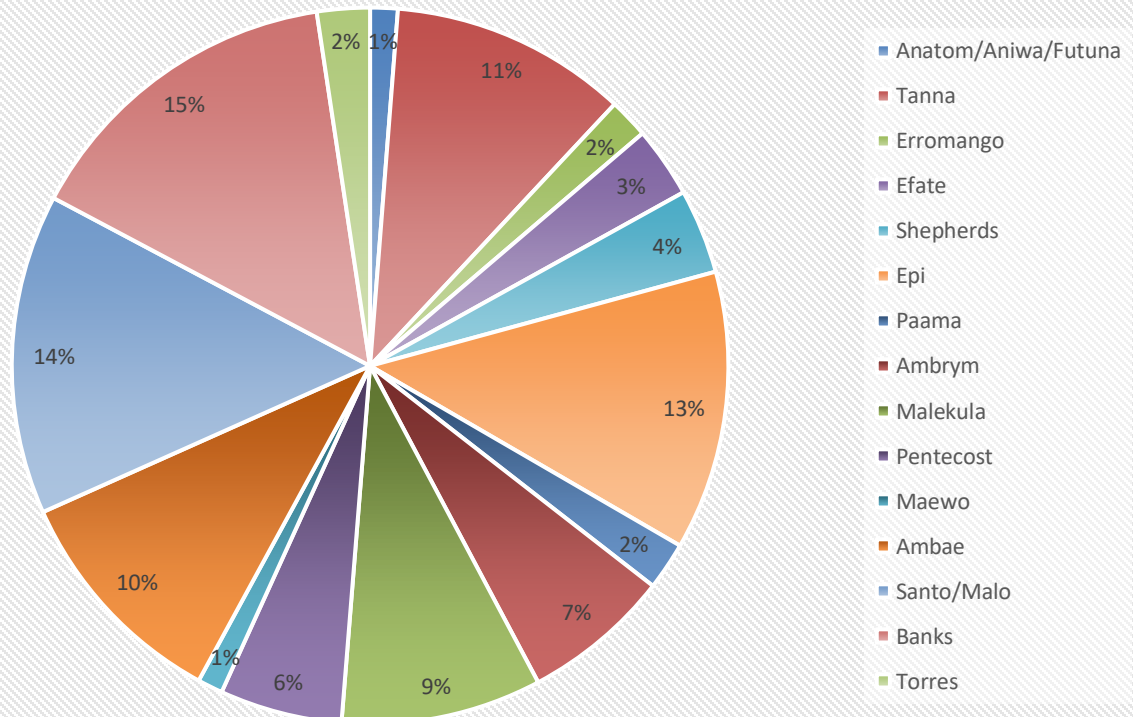
5.7. Proportion of New Hebridean workers in Queensland by islands in 5-year periods from 1863 to 1904



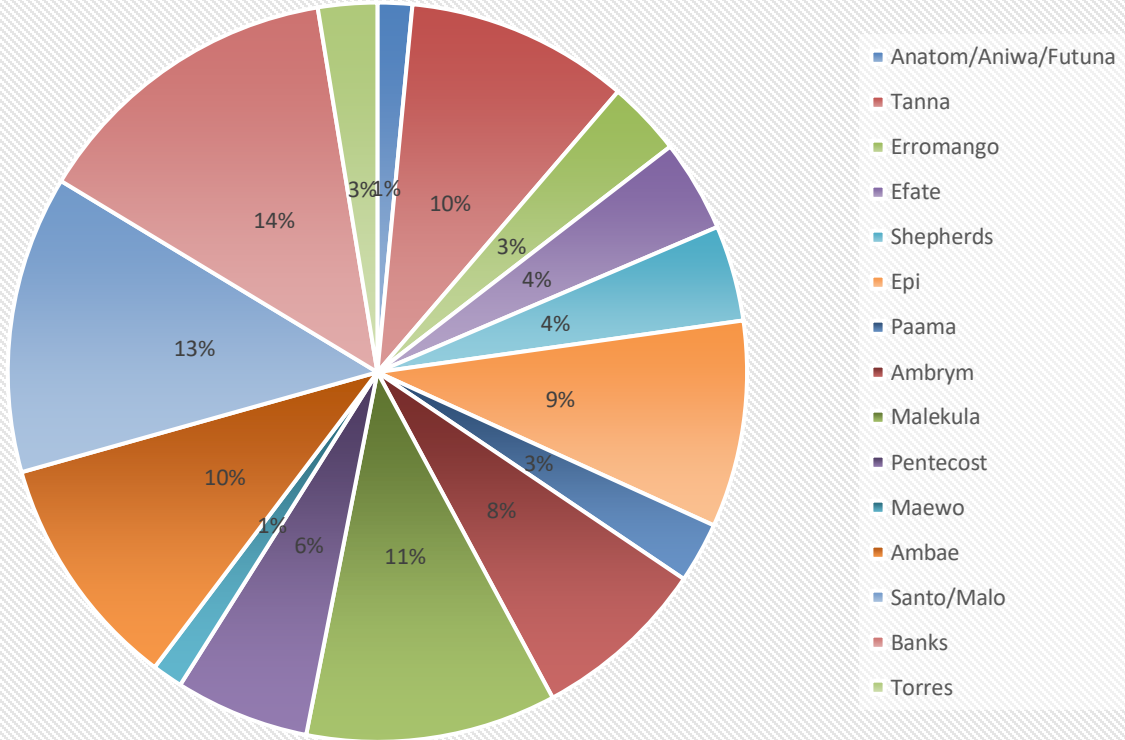
1873-1877



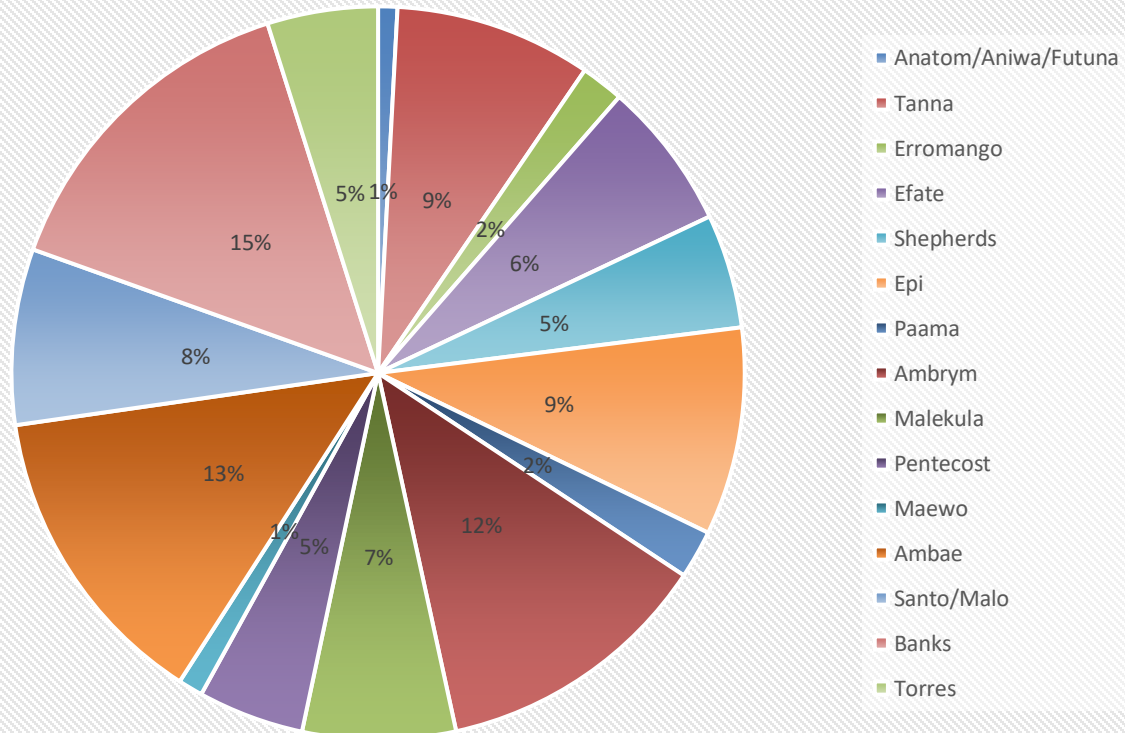
1878-1882



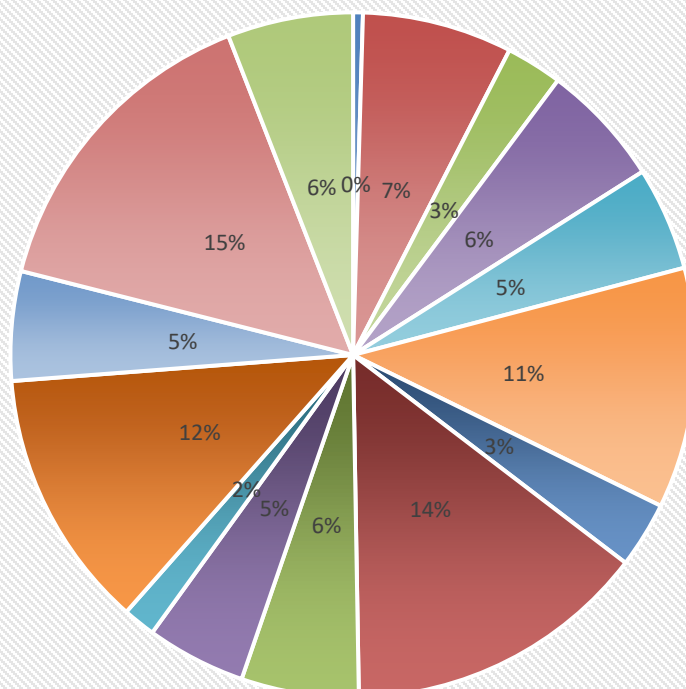
1883-1887



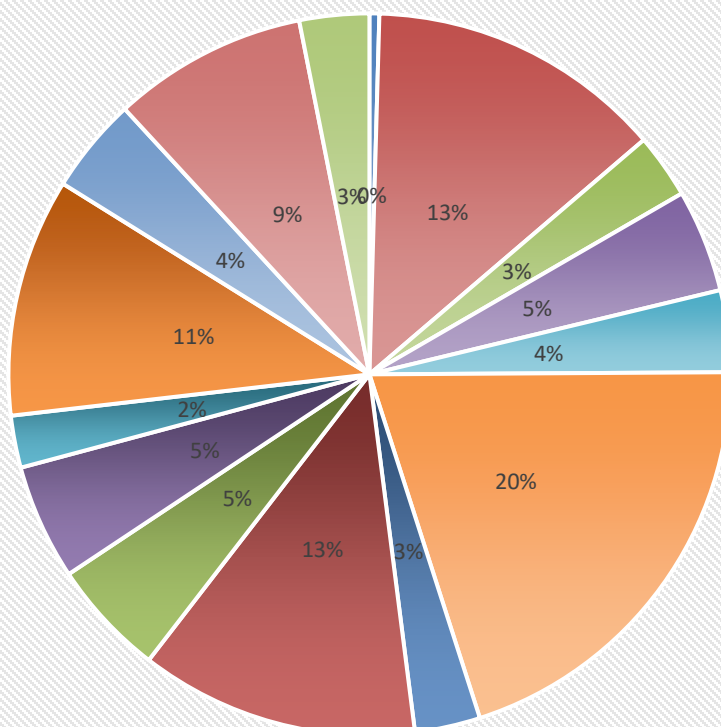
1888-1892



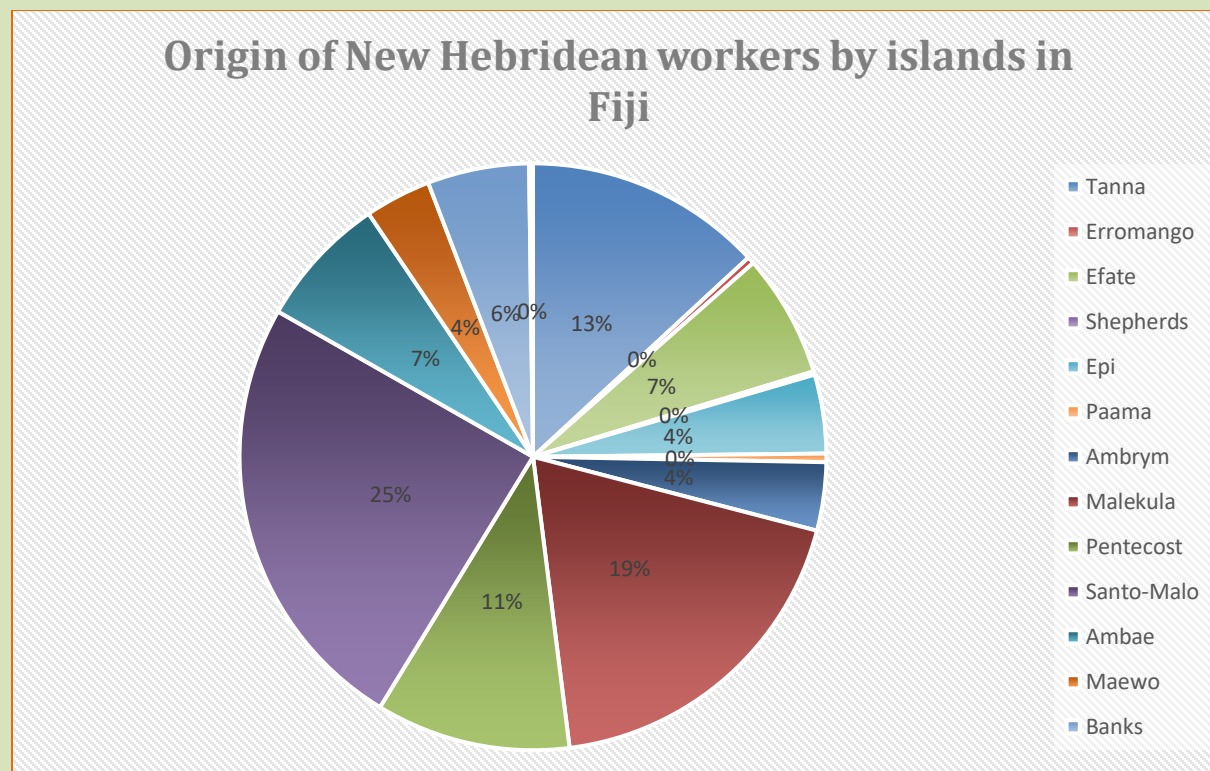
1893-1897



1898-1904



5.8. Origin of New Hebridean workers in Fiji – 1864-1911



6. The consequences of Blackbirding in Vanuatu

In the absence of systematic research on this issue, we present here only a few hypotheses summarized in the following table:

	Explanation/Hypotheses
Demographic consequences	Two significant recruitment factors may have had an impact on the archipelago's demographic decline: 1. Recruitment-related mortality rates (travel mortality rates) and plantation-related mortality rates (mortality rates combining poor conditions and diseases on plantations; 25% in Queensland) represent a significant loss that varies by island⁴⁵; 2. The fact that the recruits were young may have had an impact in the medium term on the decreases in birth and fertility rates; 3. Recruitment contributed to the spread of venereal diseases especially when workers returned.
Economic consequences	1. Increased consumption of traffic-related products: guns, tools, food products consumed on plantations and for which demand has increased during returns: rice, corned beef, etc.;

⁴⁵ On this issue, see: Rallu Jean-Louis. *Le point de vue d'un démographe sur les effets du recrutement de main-d'œuvre*. Journal de la Société des océanistes, n°82-83, tome 42, 1986. Les plantations dans le Pacifique Sud. pp. 171-176 and the work of Ralph Shlomowitz: <https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/Ralph-Shlomowitz-49493714>

	2. Many workers were unable to reintegrate into their communities and joined local European plantations; 3. To what extent have returned workers contributed to the increase in local copra production?
Religious consequences	1. Many workers who had returned from Queensland, Fiji or Caledonia had converted to Christianity and played important roles in the Christianisation of the archipelago. Many cases are known such as that of Lomaï from Lenakel or James Kaum and Jean-Baptiste Caïnas in Ambrym; 2. To what extent has the return of converts accelerated the Christianisation of the archipelago?
Cultural and political consequences	1. Emergence of Bislama; 2. What effects on Melanesian systems of governance? To what extent has Blackbirding influenced the Melanesian «traditions»? 3. Graham Miller in Volume 3 of <i>Live</i> suggests a link between the returns and the emergence of an opposition to colonial power and a national consciousness through the journey of the two Ti Napua brothers of Tongoa, both returning from Queensland. Can this link be documented for other islands?
Social consequences	1. Missionaries often invoked that <i>Blackbirding</i> had accentuated “tribal wars” by increasing the introduction of firearms; 2. Missionaries often invoked that Blackbirding had accentuated social problems because of the introduction of alcohol; 3. To what extent has Blackbirding influenced the position and role of women in the society?

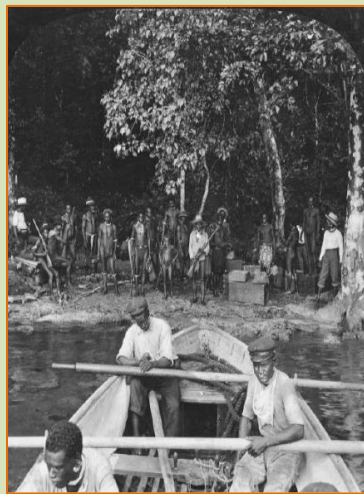


Image 28. Return of workers with their boxes of goods, Malaita, Solomon Islands, 1907⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Source: British Museum, photograph by George Rose, Rose Stereotypes, neg, 1257, in Thomas Edge-Partington Collection; in Clive Moore: *Sugaropolis*; p25.

7. References

One can find in Clive Moore: *Hard Work: Australian South Sea Islander Bibliography. With a Select Bibliography of the Sugar Industry, and the Pacific Labour Trade*, a very extensive bibliography on labour traffic in Australia, and in *Research Guide to records about Australian South Sea Islander peoples at Queensland State Archives*, a comprehensive guide to Australian sources (<https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/blog/south-sea-islander-records-queensland-state-archives>).

The references listed here are those used to establish this chronology and the section on human trafficking statistics.

7.1. Primary sources
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Boyd Benjamin: <i>South Sea Island immigration for cotton culture: a letter to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary of Queensland</i> , 1863; https://nla.gov.au:443/tarkine/nla.obj-497822142
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Palmer, George: <i>Kidnapping in the South Seas: Being a narrative of three month's cruise of H.M. Ship Rosario</i> ; Edinburgh: Edmonton & Douglas; 1871.
Paton John G: <i>Kanaka labour traffic between Queensland and the New Hebrides</i> ; 1893; http://www.jstor.org/stable/60217039
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